Private

Rome Fri. Dec 7th 1866
(my birth day)

My dear Tom

The good fortune of a £5 note coming into my hands gives me this double pleasure of writing you & sending the money to dear Mercia, (the 1st half enclosed & the 2d tomorrow) - 'Tis a long time since we had a chat on my part I have not had much that was worth telling & this I know that any thing I write will be sure to interest you - I have been a sufferer from rheumatism nearly all this year yet have gone on with picture of the marriage of Cana & am glad to say it now approaches completion

I hope this will find you better than I am, for having had to nurse a cold on my chest, & the weather being cruelly damp, I am so weak that I

I can scarcely walk, but however as I am now picking up I'll try & call up a little fun

The most marvellous thing in these most marvellous times is that the King of Italy has just offered me the late Ambassadors Palace (Palazzo de Firenze) & the deed of consignment is now making out – so I shall a beautiful residence with that greatest beauty of a house in being rent free, am I not at last fortunate!

This Palace becomes the property of the Italian crown by the treaty of peace twixt Italy & Austria – the ex Minister Marquis Baglioni was living in it till the 30th but he declared that he would rather die than give it up, & he did die on the very day!!

Rome is all in a state of hushed fever & the Irish Monks & Priests are claiming my protection.

My Eleanor is just off to Walters marriage in Scotland, so I shall be all alone

My love to dear Maria & I'll write her tomorrow with the other half

ever loving Joe

My best love to all your dear ones not forgetting the old arm chair, when shall I sit in it again?

Walter's marriage I hope & think will turn
out well, his singular that he should have
taken a scotch wife also & at the same age
that I was — You are right, he's very proud
but yet what he possesses he gets all from
me, his education, his position, his fame
whereas I had it all to do for myself
& I don't know any thing that gratifies me
more than that I have not a spot of
pride or pomp, nothing seems able to
turn my head, & so I am always in a
real state of calmness & regret to take any
bull by the horns, aye even a Popes bull
if he shows — There now you wanted a
long letter & so I've been obliged to write
you mine rigmarole —

Rome is charmingly quiet — the French
going seems to have set all to rights &
I have no fear for the future — I just
hear that the Ambassadors arms have been
taken down from the Palace & all the irons
left for me to put up my British Arms

Your loving brother Joe